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No. 289

THE MAID

A Comedy in One Act

BY

BULAH KING

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PRICE 25 CENTS

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
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A Charming Comedy in four acts, by Winchell Smith. The cast calls for seventeen males and three females, but by doubling a number of the small male parts it can be played by eleven males and three females. Three interior and one exterior scenes. Costumes modern. Plays 2¼ hours.

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THE MAID

CHARACTERS

ANNE ..... *A Puzzle.*
SUSAN ..... *Fresh and Breezy.*
MRS. THORNDIKE ..... *Hostess.*
MISS CRESSY, MISS TARR ..... *Estelle's Friends.*
ESTELLE ..... *Her Daughter.*
MISS CHESTERTON ..... *A Relic-Hunter.*
MR. BREWSTER ..... *Ph. D. L.L. D.*

OCT 14 1914

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THE MAID

TIME:—*The Present.*

SCENE:—*The study in a fashionable summer home. There is a window at the rear with a window-seat beneath it. A door at left opens into hall and one at right into an inner room. An arm-chair with a reading table covered with books stands at the left center. A small round table at the right back; chairs, book-cases, etc., about the room. At the rise of the curtain,* ANNE, *an attractive girl, dressed as second girl, sits in a heap in the arm-chair, engrossed in a book. Her duster and broom are near-by on the arm of the chair. In a moment,* SUSAN, *another maid, flighty and full of life, enters quickly and flips her duster in* ANNE'S *face.*

SUSAN. At it again? Well I never! What do you think you're hired for—to read Shakespeare?

ANNE. (*grimacing*) Susan, you stick as close as my shadow. Can't you let a poor weary body rest?

SUSAN. Rest? All you do is rest. It's me does the hard work, and no wonder Jim says my hands are as red as lobsters.

ANNE. Does Jim say that? (*puts up book*)

SUSAN. He sure does. At the theatre last night he kept tellin' of the slender, white hands of the

dancer, and lookin' at me with them eyes o' his. He might ha' known she doused 'em with powder behind the scenes to get 'em white, and I kept thinkin' o' your'n all the time. How long you been hired out anyway?

ANNE. (*counting on her fingers*) One, two, three, four——

SUSAN. Four what? Days? The cook and me both says you look like you was new at it. Marie says you got highbrow ideas about your bed, and hate to eat in the kitchen, and the other night you cried because your fork tasted of onions. Say, you ain't a princess in disguise are you?

ANNE. (*yawning*) Do you think I'd let a hateful alarm clock wake me up if I were a princess? Child, I'd sleep in luxury!

SUSAN. (*beginning to dust*) More's the pity you ain't one. I see you like to sleep well enough.

ANNE. Cheer up. I'm learning fast, you know. (*picking up duster and working*)

SUSAN. Guess you'll have to with the prospects o' company comin'. Mr. Brewster, Ph. D., Ll. D. and half a dozen other D's has come for two weeks. He's the fellow what writes books, and Miss Estelle's dippy over him. I guess he thinks she's an L. O. P. H. by the way he looked at her this morning.

ANNE. For Heaven's sake, what's an L. O. P. H.?

SUSAN. Left on Papa's Hands. Ain't that fitting?

ANNE. (*doubled up with laughter*) Perhaps she won't be one now the stranger's come.

SUSAN. Oh, go on. She ain't his style. He's after a highbrow.

ANNE. (*interested*) You don't mean David Brewster, the writer? Why, all his books are here! I dusted them this morning. What's *he* doing here at Mrs. Thorndike's?

SUSAN. (*stopping short*) Why, Mrs. Thorndike's

brother—say, he's a corker, no more like her than sugar's like sauerkrout. When he's here, it's heaven. Say, once he give me a book o' soft leather and the loveliest red covers. I ain't never read it cause it's on "Rhetorical Expressions of Speech," and that ain't in my line, but you bet I felt lifted up. I wouldn't speak to Jim for a week and he was some cut up.

ANNE. But what about the brother? Is he coming soon? (*sitting on the arm of the chair*)

SUSAN. The brother? He's in foreign parts chippin' rocks to bring home to put in the cabinets. Folks says he's got a lot of brains. I guess he has. Anyhow, he's got all Madam's and Estelle's share. Well anyway, Brewster's an Englishman come over to see the country. He was stoppin' at the hotel until Mrs. Thorndike got wind of it and went after him, and Lizzie says she really begged him to come here just 'cause he's a friend of her brother. My opinion is, she likes to get in with the big bugs—(*whispering*) and don't forget Estelle! Mrs. T's got a spare hook out for a son-in-law, and Estelle *has* got a dowery.

ANNE. (*seriously*) Is he that kind?

SUSAN. You can't tell. Don't be alarmed, chick. All men like a heavy wallet, and he's the kind that wants a soft snap. You'd know it by the way he leaves his clothes 'round for me to pick up.

ANNE. (*at the window*) There they go now across the lawn. (*half sorrowfully*) They're going to play tennis, Susan—and this delightful morning!

SUSAN. Really? Let's have a look. (*pushing up to window*) Look at the flannels, white and spotless, will yer? Ain't Estelle a fool creeping along like a clinging vine, ain't she though? (ANNE *gazes wistfully*) My, but Estelle does have the clothes, don't she? Did you ever see such elegant, white hands as she's got, all covered with rings? Did you notice them at dinner last night? Say, what's the matter, are you dreaming? Ain't you heard a word?

(*Both sit on window-seat.*)

ANNE. (*gazing at her hands*) Would you call my hands *very* red, Susan?

SUSAN. Didn't I tell yer they wa'n't nothing to see side o' mine? (*turning towards window*) Say, look at 'em now.

ANNE. (*turning her head again*) They look happy.

SUSAN. Huh, Estelle does, but she always wears that grin. Fiddle-dee-dee looks glum as the villain last——

ANNE. (*rising, disgusted, and pushing* SUSAN *away*) You attend too many gay vaudevilles, Miss!

SUSAN. (*offended*) I'd rather do that than mope in my room smellin' burnt kerosene.

ANNE. I don't—I gaze at the stars through the skylight. The lamp is always out!

SUSAN. Why don't you get a fellah and come out with the crowd? The movies had a dandy show last night. Come with me some night, will you?

ANNE. (*shaking her head*) I'd never answer the alarm-clock, then.

SUSAN. Say, if you're as lazy as that, go sit down in the arm-chair and rest.

ANNE. And do nothing? (*beginning to dust*)

SUSAN. Try and look handsome. That'll keep you busy enough.

ANNE. Sh-sh—(*raising her hand*)

SUSAN. Who's coming, his lordship?

ANNE. (*tragically*) I hear the rustle of skirts!

SUSAN. The head of the house!

(MRS. THORNDIKE, *a large, haughty woman sweeps in.*)

MRS. T. Are both of you girls needed in this room? Susie, go to the kitchen at once!

(*Exit* SUSAN *with a slat.*)

MRS. T. (*turning to* ANNE) Such a maid! Impossible, absolutely impossible to teach her anything! I have the most horrible fear when she enters the room with my precious china. Anne, haven't you dusted? You girls waste the whole morning talking. What have you been doing? I want Mr. Brewster to find this study a perfect haven of rest, and now it isn't even ready for him. Do hurry! There's one of his own books on the table covered with dust. He'd think I never read it! (*picking up book*) Who took this off the shelf, anyway? I'm sure I haven't touched it.

ANNE. (*turning*) Perhaps—maybe—that was the one I was looking over.

MRS. T. You—you reading "Psychological Moments in the Life of a Pragmatist?" (*sarcastically*) The very idea! (ANNE *stares amazed*) Oh—ho, wouldn't Mr. Brewster laugh—an ignorant parlor maid brousing, duster in hand, over his book! Really, I——

ANNE. (*hotly*) This is—is too insulting! (*going to window and looking out*) Then you don't believe we have brains at all! (*turning*) or even wish to learn! Why do you diagnose the sociological problem thus? (MRS. THORNDIKE *drops book*) Do you for one moment assume that the masses have no incentive genius? Why, I am deeply grieved to find a woman in your walk of life ready to discourage the ambitions of the working girl.

MRS. T. (*bewildered*) I never could fathom you! I wonder who you are!

ANNE. Don't wonder, Mrs. Thorndike, you have so *much* to think of. (*dusting*)

MRS. T. (*half-stammering*) I—I—you—finish this room at once and come to me for further orders! (*sweeps out*)

ANNE. (*laughing, leaning against the books*) I

couldn't help it. It was too good, and such an opportunity! Poor Mrs. Thorndike, she's a poor purblind bit of humanity, after all!

(*Enter* MR. BREWSTER, *a tall, handsome, rather dignified man, carrying gingerly an elaborate vessel from which long wreaths of smoke curl about his head.* ANNE *stops laughing suddenly and begins to work.*)

MR. B. Is there—have you a place for this—er—

ANNE. (*hurriedly clears a space on the table*) Yes, yes sir. (*placing the vessel*)

MR. B. (*looking up at her*) That table is quite safe? (*with a smile*) It's a very unusually rare bit of porcelain—I—I believe Miss Thorndike brought it from India.

ANNE. (*bending to examine*) How very delectable it is!

MR. B. Delectable? (*condescendingly*)

ANNE. That's what I said.

MR. B. Yes, yes, I know (*wiping his brow*) but I wonder if I could endure it. (*goes to chair*) She thinks it will bring up inspiration—the only thing it will bring up is my lunch. As if I could write in this Bedlam.

ANNE. Shall I go out?

MR. B. (*after a pause, during which he stares at her*) No, no, you're no bother—whatsoever.

ANNE. (*meekly*) A few more books to be dusted, then——

MR. B. (*suddenly*) Here's some right here. (*she goes to the back*) No, no, right in front of me! Have those been dusted? (*with a smile*)

ANNE. Perhaps not. But *these* surely need dusting. (*pointing to his on the table*)

MR. B. (*smiling*) My own—is it possible? Aren't these Mrs. Thorndike's and Estelle's daily diet?

ANNE. (*demurely*) I couldn't say. I don't wait on table.

MR. B. (*aghast*) No? You're just employed to keep the telltale moss off certain ponderous tomes on the shelves?

ANNE. (*wide-eyed*) Tomes? And what is that, please?

MR. B. (*as if talking to a child*) A book—a big book, full of big words—long words—hard words. You see?

ANNE. (*changing her tone*) Oh, I comprehend. A tome is a volume full of vast speculations in the field of thought.

MR. B. (*half-rising, amazed*) Why—why did you ask? (*looking at her from head to foot*) You—indeed—you *are* a puzzle!

ANNE. Most girls are!

(*Pause—he watches her.*)

MR. B. You seem to take pleasure in being so.

ANNE. (*humbly*) Perhaps that's the only pleasure I get.

MR. B. (*interested*) What in the wide world would afford you most pleasure?

ANNE. (*demurely*) To—to keep your incense burning. (*points to incense vase*)

MR. B. (*confused*) My—incense—oh—yes.

ANNE. You're not an adept at repartee? I dared hope you might say——

MR. B. That you without the incense might be inspiration enough? (*archly*) How does that strike you? Perhaps you don't like flowery speeches made in your favor—perhaps you're not used to them. Have you—er—a beau?

ANNE. Do you mean a steady? (*copying* SUSAN'S *vernacular*)

MR. B. (*surprised again*) Why—er—yes, I suppose so.

ANNE. (*gayly*) Well, you see, there was Jake. He used to take me to the show, but there's so many, I can't tell which one I like best. Sometimes I think I'll put them up to lottery!

MR. B. (*slowly*) But that isn't right. Marriage is a serious step, and you must be *slow* and *cautious, slow* and *cautious*.

ANNE. (*looking at him*) And, I suppose, very discreet. And then there's riches—fortune brings such ease, you know.

MR. B. Do you long for a life of ease?

ANNE. (*embarrassed*) Well, you see, I'm different. Servants never even hope for such remote things.

MR. B. (*kindly*) But sometimes they do, and you may be the exception.

ANNE. Oh, but the kind of man I want would never even *look* at me!

MR B. (*emphatically*) Who in Heaven's name is the man who wouldn't look at you?

ANNE. (*confused*) I—I meant in the light of marriage.

MR. B. (*rising, rather excited*) Even so—don't you see you're remarkable for a girl in your class?

ANNE. Yes I *do* see I'm remarkable (*backing off*) for a girl of my class. I ought to be in the kitchen cleaning silver. (*starting to go*)

MR. B. No—no—wait. (*he steps forward*)

ANNE. But the cook has a temper—and then you know I'm not hired for this.

MR. B. What do you mean—by this?

ANNE. Talking to a *distinguished* gentleman from England.

MR. B. How did you know I'm from England?

ANNE. You talk like an Englishman.

MR. B. Through my nose—eh?

ANNE. Perhaps!

MR. B. (*laughing*) But pray, why did you think I was distinguished?

ANNE. (*gayly*) Maybe I've seen your name in the paper, and maybe I know more about you than you think. We read the papers, you know, even in the servant's quarters.

MR. B. (*slyly*) Many of the wits of the world are there!

ANNE. Do you really think so? (*enthusiastically*)

MR. B. (*surprised*) I—I was thinking of you. You're still a puzzle.

(ESTELLE *enters with a flourish.*)

ESTELLE. Oh, you're here, Mr. Brewster? (*stops and looks from one to the other*) And I've been searching the grounds for you. How can you stay in with all nature calling you? (*exit* ANNE. *He turns abruptly and watches her go*) I thought you were a nature worshipper.

MR. B. (*cooly*) I happened to find a bit of human nature of more interest.

ESTELLE. (*angrily*) Calling you? Has she had the impudence to stay and bother you? I'll speak to mother about it. (*starts to go*)

MR. B. (*troubled*) Don't trouble yourself, Miss Estelle—*pray* don't.

ESTELLE. (*crossly*) Mother doesn't like her anyway. She acts so superior, and I'm sure *I* can't endure her. She's the most extraordinary thing I ever——

MR. B. (*interrupting quicky*) She *is* extraordinary, you are right. That's what kept me in doors all this morning. (*boldly*) Did you ever stop to talk with her?

ESTELLE. (*indignant*) The idea—with a maid? Of course not. I've something better to do. If that's the company you prefer—(*sits on window-seat*)

MR. B. (*sitting down in arm-chair*) Miss Estelle, evdently nature has not soothed you this morning.

ESTELLE. (*rather ashamed of her temper*) Well —that girl—I'm sick of her—and you'd be too if you heard as much about her as I do! She's upset the whole house. I hoped at least *you* wouldn't discuss her.

MR. B. (*resignedly*) I won't. Did you want me for anything? Can I help you?

ESTELLE. (*walking up to incense vessel*) Oh, you have it still burning. Did inspiration come?

MR. B. Yes, indeed! But quite a different kind than usual.

(*Enter* MRS. THORNDIKE.)

MRS. T. (*suggestively*) Am I intruding? Don't let me interrupt!

MR. B. (*quickly*) No, no, sit down.

(*She sits.*)

MRS. T. I'm waiting for Miss Chesterton. She will be here in a moment.

MR. B. And who is Miss Chesterton?

ESTELLE. Oh, you ought to know her. She's simply wild about you and has your picture in every room.

MRS. T. (*shocked*) Estelle!!!

MR. B. (*rather bored*) I don't even know her! Who is she?

MRS. T. A dear friend of mine who lives here. Estelle and I first met her at Baden.

MR. B. Was she afflicted with rheumatism?

MRS. T. Oh, no! But she loved the scenery!

ESTELLE. Why, mamma, she did have a touch of rheumatics. Women of her age usually do. She tries to keep young but you'd know she was over forty. By the way, some of the girls are coming over too. (*to* MR. BREWSTER) More hero-worship.

MRS. T. Poor Mr. Brewster—I don't want to tire

you all out. I really don't, but after to-day everyone shall be kept from the study—even the maids.

MR. B. (*hastily*) How lonely the day would be. Honest labor always entrances me!

ESTELLE. (*wilted*) Mamma, I must match my embroidery silks and get to work. (*to* MR. BREWSTER) I'm not always so unoccupied.

MR. B. Oh, but I wasn't referring to you.

(ANNE *comes to door.*)

ANNE. Miss Cressy and Miss Tarr to see Miss Thorndike. (*exits*)

(*Two girls enter.* MISS CRESSY *is dressed very severely while* MISS TARR *is fluffily gowned.*)

ESTELLE. (*jumping up and kissing the girls*) Oh, you lucky creatures. You've come just the right time.

MISS T. Really! How exciting!

ESTELLE. (*leading the girls*) Miss Cressy and Miss Tarr, Mr. Brewster.

(*Shake hands.*)

MISS T. (*ecstatically*) You can't imagine how enchanted I am! Why, I've been waiting for simply ages to be in company with a great man.

MR. B. And you, Miss Cressy, have you felt thrills of expectation? (*sarcastically*)

MISS C. (*bluntly*) No! Father's a professor, and entertains all the queers.

MRS. T. Queers? My dear!

MR. B. (*smiling*) She means rarities, of course.

MISS C. (*walking about looking at books*) Well, rarities, then.

MISS T. (*sitting down*) How does it feel to be adored?

MR. B. That depends on who adores.

MISS T. (*squelched*) Oh!

Mrs. T. You see what a fascinating creature you are to these girls, Mr. Brewster?

Estelle. He doesn't half appreciate our affections.

Miss C. (*bluntly*) Affections don't get you anywhere.

Mrs. T. You are so matter-of-fact, Janette.

Miss T. Isn't she, though. Why, she would visit Romeo's tomb and not feel a thrill. *Mother* says it isn't natural in a girl. (*to* Mr. Brewster) Have you ever been to Venice?

Mr. B. (*bored*) Yes, several times.

Miss T. And floated in a gondola (*rapturously edging nearer*) at moonlight? Why, it's Heaven on earth. The waves make the loveliest sound, and sometimes you can hear the music from the Palazzo. Mother says Venice is a spot for lovers.

Estelle. (*bitingly*) But you didn't get one there.

Mrs. T. There, there girls, your time will come. There's plenty of fish in the sea.

Miss C. But half of us haven't any bait.

Mr. B. (*looking at each quizzically*) And you've all traveled the globe?

Estelle. It always seems queer to me that servants have plenty of beaux.

Miss T. But maids are so *common*. *Mother* says they engage themselves to a man who can't even buy a *diamond*.

Mrs. T. We have an uncommon second girl.

Estelle. (*disgusted*) Anne again!

Mr. B. (*interested*) Yes?

Mrs. T. (*to* Estelle) What is it dear? Am I making myself a bore?

Estelle. Yes, mother, when you talk about *her*.

Mr. B. What were you going to say about Anne?

Mrs. T. Sh—sh.

(Anne *enters and announces* Miss Chesterton. *Exit* Anne, *enter* Miss Chesterton, *a spinster, simpering straight to* Mr. Brewster.)

MISS CHES. At last! Do let me shake your hand!

MR. B. (*rising, mopping his brow*) Charmed! Delighted!

MISS CHES. You can't imagine the thrills I have to be near you, how I've longed for this moment to come! (*fumbling in her bag*) Do let me have your autograph before I sit down! I have my book right here, and I want you to start it. (*girls whisper. He writes his name*) I wonder if I'd be asking too much of you if I had one lock of your hair. Ple-ase do! I haven't anyone's hair to wear in my locket, except Tabby's, my little pet. I have my scissors right here. (*she draws them out, edging forward.* MR. BREWSTER *draws back*) I won't clip it where it will show, truly,—only right back of this ear!

(MR. BREWSTER, *backing off, bumps against* ANNE *who is just entering with tea service.*)

MR. B. (*turning quickly*) I beg your pardon! (*forgetting everything else but* ANNE) Did I hurt you?

MRS. T. (*rising*) Of course not, Mr. Brewster! How awkward of you Anne!

MR. B. (*to* ANNE) Have I spoiled the mixture? (*takes the tray*) Where shall I put this?

MRS. T. Right here, Mr. Brewster. (*indicating table. He places it and* ANNE *starts to serve*)

MISS CHES. Are you ready? Just one lock, please!

MR. B. Oh, Miss Chesterton, I beg of you—I need all I have. (*he hands her book*)

MISS T. (*dismayed*) Are you getting bald?

MISS C. He'll be shorn if he has many people like Miss Chesterton after him, poor lamb.

MISS CHES. But my little heart is so empty. (*indicating locket*)

MISS C. (*bluntly*) And wants a few hairs to twine around it to keep it from breaking.

MISS CHES. (*ignoring her*) But maybe I can

have a button off your coat! One right on the sleeve —It will never show, and think how I'd enjoy having it with me winter evenings. I'd almost think you were with me.

(*Stands gazing soulfully at him.* ANNE *passes tea cups.*)

MR. B. (*trying to pacify her*) Have you some scissors?

MISS CHES. Yes, indeed, but please get someone else to cut it off. I'm so excited, and I might stick the point in you. (*she jumps around excitedly*)

MR. B. (*takes scissors and hands them to* ANNE *who is just passing his tea*) Will you cut it off for me, please? (*smiling at her*)

(ANNE *cuts off the button, the girls staring, and hands it to* MISS CHESTERTON.)

MISS C. Well, I never! That beats all!

MISS CHES. (*kissing it*) Oh, precious remembrance, more precious than any jewel.

ESTELLE. Even a diamond?

MISS T. (*sentimentally*) *Mother* says it isn't the worth of the jewel but the memory around it that counts.

MISS C. Huh! Queer sort of memory around a sleeve button.

MRS. T. (*jokingly*) I suppose you'd prefer the vest button, nearest the heart!

ESTELLE. (*sourly*) This tea is dreadful, mother! Good Heavens, Anne, can't you make tea?

MR. B. (*sweetly*) Mine is delicious, and an Englishman is a connoisseur of tea. May I have some more, please?

(ANNE *takes cup. He follows and talks with her at table.*)

ESTELLE. How can he say so? Why, mother, it's bitter as gall.

MISS C. It takes gall to serve it too!

MRS. T. (*despairingly*) That's a pity. Sometimes I think maids are the worst problem——

MISS T. *Mother* says they're the trial of her life.

MISS C. Maybe she's the trial of theirs too!

(MISS TARR *gives her a look.*)

MISS CHES. (*trotting up and picking* MR. BREWSTER'S *sleeve*) Oh, Mr. Brewster! Don't waste *all* your time at the tea-table. I'd like some sugar! I'd like some sugar!

MR. B. (*passing it*) Sweets to the sweets.

MISS CHES. (*simpering*) Um—m—m— Sweets *from* the sweet, *I* think.

MISS C. (*gruffly*) For goodness' sake, we'll all be *bitter* if such partiality goes on.

MISS T. Oh, do sit down and tell us of your travels. You must have had an interesting life!

(*He sits down.*)

MISS C. (*drawing her chair close*) But are you happy all alone?

MR. B. (*cooly*) Are you?

MISS CHES. Well—I have Tabby, but then, he can't talk.

MISS C. But you make up for him, probably! If he could, there'd be no chance. (*sits on window-seat*)

MRS. T. (*moving up*) Such remarks! I don't know what to make of you girls. Anne, get some more cakes.

(*Exit* ANNE.)

MISS T. (*to* MRS. THORNDIKE) Where did you

get your maid? *Mother* says you always have the best luck in getting decent-looking ones!

Miss C. Too bad you can't be one, Clara. You'd captivate all the guests.

Estelle. (*bitterly*) Perhaps that's what Anne's doing!

Miss Ches. She has such a sweet face! I could almost imagine her a relic-hunter at St. Thomas' shrine.

Mr. B. (*smiling*) Helping herself to some of the jewels, you mean?

Miss Ches. If she were sincere, that would not be half as bad as—well as——

Mr. B. (*interrupting*) Robbing a poor man of his coat-button, eh?

Miss Ches. Ho—how you jest! You must be full of wit. (Anne *enters*) The other evening I felt so blue—all alone. I sat down to read one of your books, and you know it cheered me, and in a few moments I was sound asleep!

Estelle. Oh!

(Miss Tarr *and* Miss Cressy *giggle.*)

Mrs. T. (*trying to mend matters*) I guess you didn't mean just that, did you?

Mr. B. (*feigning sorrow*) You can't imagine how you have grieved me; Miss Chesterton, really! Then I have lost one of my most fervent admirers!

Miss Ches. (*half-crying*) Oh, don't, Mr. Brewster. What can I do to recall——

Mr. B. (*heartlessly*) Nothing, Miss Chesterton, nothing!

Miss Ches. Oh, someone help me! Isn't there anything that I could do to take back my blunder?

Estelle. Embroider him a pair of house slippers. (*sarcastically*)

Miss T. A frilled dickie!

Miss C. Red ruffled armlets!

Miss Ches. Would any of those do? (*much excited*)

Mr. B. (*sadly, shaking his head*) I'm afraid not!

Miss Ches. (*taking out her handkerchief*) Mrs. Thorndike, can *you* help me or—or even the maid?

Mr. B. You haven't asked them.

Mrs. T. *I'd* suggest you give back the button! He may need it.

Miss Ches. Don't ask *that* of me. It's worth more to me than a chip off the——

Miss C. Off the old block! (*they laugh*)

Miss Ches. (*unheeding*) No, than a chip off Plymouth Rock, even! The rock of our venerated forefathers.

Mr. B. (*boldly*) Perhaps the maid has the very answer. (*turning toward her as she is standing near tea table*)

Miss Ches. (*turning toward her*) Have you—can you possibly suggest something that I could do to win back his regard?

Anne. (*laughing*) Don't bother yourself. There are plenty more shrines in the world where one may worship.

Mr. B. Where there are vessels of burning incense instead of one? (*to* Anne)

Anne. But you don't care for even one.

Mr. B. (*earnestly*) It's according to who kindles the flame!

Mrs. T. (*breaking in*) Mr. Brewster, have you seen my new vase of porphyry?

Miss Ches. Have you one? I had an imitation one but Tabby knocked it off the whatnot.

Mrs. T. (*rising*) My brother sent it from abroad—it's a very rare piece.

Mr. B. I was with John when he bought it.

Mrs. T. *Do* come and tell us about it.

Miss T. How wonderful! *Mother* says it's just doubly interesting to have——

Miss C. Hush *Mother's* said enough this afternoon for an absent lady!

(*They start toward the door.*)

Miss Ches. Let Mr. Brewster go first. He's to be our leader and we'll follow!

(*Exeunt, except* Anne. Anne *gazes after him a moment, then wearily picks up the tea things.* Susan *rushes in with a telegram, wild-eyed and trembling.*)

Susan. (*reluctantly handling it*) It's one of them awful telegram things. (Anne *takes it*) My, ain't you calm—somebody might be dead! (*she waits nervously while* Anne *reads*) Is it dreadful? (*tensely*) Is someone dead?

Anne. (*sinking in chair*) No! But for mercy's sake, Susan, why don't you frighten anyone to death!

Susan. What's it say? You *do* look kind of pale.

Anne. It's happy news—at least it's meant to be. I'm going to leave you.

Susan. Going to get married?

Anne. Oh, no! It's from my father—they're going abroad and want me, but——

Susan. Abroad? When?

Anne. In two days on the Cretic.

Susan. Huh, how did you get passage? I read last night the steerage was full a week ago. Lizzie Tulliver's going back home on the same boat. Say, wa'n't to hear *my* news? I'm going to leave too.

Anne. Going to get married?

Susan. Um-um. Jim has had a raise, and he's promised to save up for a home.

Anne. Oh, Susan, what a pity. I wanted you for myself.

Susan. (*amazed*) You!!

ANNE. (*quickly*) Susan, do you really want to marry Jim?

SUSAN. (*sitting on window-seat*) I don't know! I don't want to be with Mrs. Thorndike all my life! I *know that!*

ANNE. (*earnestly*) But you won't have to be. Would you come with me?

SUSAN. (*laughing*) Huh, where you going—home in the steerage and then work on a farm? The city for me!

ANNE. (*sitting beside her and taking her hand*) Listen Susan. I'm *not* going in the steerage. I'm going to cross the water first-cabin purely for pleasure.

SUSAN. Well I never! Are you crazy?

ANNE. Not at all!

SUSAN. Who's paying your passage?

ANNE. My father.

SUSAN. Your *father*—you told me he was a bartender.

ANNE. No, I didn't! I told you he was *behind* the bar—he's a lawyer. (*laughing*)

SUSAN. Well I never. Give me a fan. I always said you was queer—different like.

ANNE. If you'll listen a moment, I'll tell you something.

SUSAN. (*indifferently*) Go on! Nothing'll surprise me. Go on!

ANNE. I really don't have to work.

SUSAN. Oh, no! I should say not. You got tired of pink teas and balls, I suppose.

ANNE. No, not that. I haven't been to many.

SUSAN. Well for Heaven's sake tell me what in the world sent you out to be a servant, when you didn't have to! I'd see myself! You're queerer 'an I thought you was!

ANNE. (*gayly*) I'm a kind of adventuress, don't you see? I'm anxious for all kinds of excitement.

SUSAN. Has your pa *much* money?

ANNE. Loads of it. Come with me and you'll have the easiest time ever.

SUSAN. Do you really mean it? What could I do? (*interested*)

ANNE. Be a—a kind of maid.

SUSAN. (*happily*) To *you?* Oh, lovely! I always wanted to fuss over that lovely hair of your'n.

ANNE. Would you be *very* lonely away?—across the water?

SUSAN. Without Jim? (*gazing thoughtfully out of window*)

ANNE. Yes—you couldn't take him.

SUSAN. Come to think of it, I don't believe I'd miss him a bit.

ANNE. (*rising, watching her closely*) You won't marry Jim, will you? Please Susan—he's not half good enough for you.

SUSAN. (*thinking*) I—I might get lonesome for him over there.

ANNE. (*beseeching*) But *try,* Susan, *please* try, at least, come for a while. We'll send you back if things come to worse. Will you try, please? (*pause*)

SUSAN. Wait till I see him to-night.

ANNE. (*sighing*) But I shall be gone.

SUSAN. 'Fore that? You'll have to tell Mrs. Thorndike and give her a week's notice.

ANNE. (*amazed*) A week's notice! But—but—I can't—I never thought of that.

SUSAN. She'll raise a row, and I'll have to hear it after you're gone.

ANNE. (*quickly*) Then come with me! Won't you please, Susan?

SUSAN. But Jim!

ANNE. You can write to him, and after a while you'll know better how much you love him. "Marriage is a serious step, and you should be slow and cautious." (*smiling to herself*) "Slow and cautious."

SUSAN. And you'll be with me a lot of the time? I won't be alone?

ANNE. I'll be with you all the time if you wish. We'll see all the great sights together. There's so much for you to see.

SUSAN. And I've so much to learn. (*wearily*)

ANNE. (*eagerly*) You're willing to try? You won't marry Jim?

SUSAN. (*shakes her head slowly*) I—guess—I'll follow you.

ANNE. I do need someone. Mother doesn't care for ruins and mummys, and father spends his time on the steps of the Bourse. You dear girl, won't we have a nice quiet time over there all by ourselves! (*clasping hands*)

(MR. BREWSTER *enters,* SUSAN *escapes.* MR. BREWSTER *and* ANNE *stand a moment staring at each other.*)

MR. B. You sound very exclusive! Are you and Susan to have a little party all to yourselves, or what is it, may I ask?

ANNE. (*shyly from against the wall*) Not a party. Something that lasts much longer than that. We are going abroad!

MR. B. (*becomes serious immediately*) Abroad! And soon?

ANNE. In two days—I leave to-night.

MR. B. To try your luck there?

ANNE. (*demurely, changing tone to one of lightness*) Just for pleasure. Father thought I needed a rest, and—well, Switzerland seemed the best health resort.

MR. B. (*smiling*) You're playing with me again. You needn't try to *prove* you're a puzzle. Don't play with me! (*abruptly*) I'm serious—I really—(*growing very serious*)

ANNE. (*backing off*) Why should you be?

Mr. B. Maybe I feel sorry because you're going away!

Anne. (*feigning coolness*) Has my service meant all that to you?

Mr. B. (*impatiently*) Oh, you know I don't mean that! I've never thought of you in that light at all. Anne, I love you! Don't go abroad, (*walking toward her*) but wait——

Anne. I—I must!

Mr. B. Then you don't care to wait—you don't—love me?

Anne. I—I haven't—I haven't had time to—to know.

Mr. B. Then don't go away till you do.

Anne. Stay here? Stay at Mrs. Thorndike's?

Mr. B. Why of course not. Go—er—have you a home, parents?

Anne. Both are living, but in New York.

Mr. B. (*earnestly*) Couldn't you go to them, and maybe in a day or two you'll know, and I'll come to you there for your answer. Are you sure—quite sure you can't decide here—now?

Anne. (*slowly*) Maybe I could—I made Susan—a moment ago. (*smiling*) Yes, I think I can.

Mr. B. (*eagerly*) Do—please!

Anne. (*backing off*) But you are such a great man and I'm nothing—nothing but a humble—(*he clasps her in his arms*)

Mr. B. As if that mattered, sweetheart!

(*Enter* Mrs. Thorndike *flurried, waving a paper wildly. They break apart.*)

Mrs. T. What! Well this is a day of surprises! I want you to account for yourself, young lady.

Mr. B. Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Thorndike, pray don't.

Mrs. T. Alarmed!!! I don't know what to expect next in this house!

MR. B. There's nothing more to expect, Mrs. Thorndike, everything's settled.

MRS. T. (*sinking in chair*) Well I never! And may I know the plans? It seems I ought to have a share since all this has happened in my house. I'm even more alarmed than when I saw this. (*pointing to paper*) Come here, both of you, and you, Miss Anne, kindly explain yourself. (*they gather around the paper*) What does this mean—your picture in the paper—and you Judge Mooring's daughter? *What* are you doing here?

ANNE. I—I—(*nervously*)

MRS. T. The idea! I believe you've been scheming against me. You sly girl! And now you'll tell everyone how I've treated you. It's abominable.

MR. B. (*laughing*) Does your conscience prick?

MRS. T. (*more pleasantly*) My conscience never pricks me! I'm noted for my kindness to maids and dumb animals. I'm sure Anne couldn't have found a pleasanter place to experiment in, nor a more affable mistress. Anne can see for herself how all the maids respect me and love to be able to do even the smallest thing for me. You've noticed Susan, perhaps, my dear, how her face lights up when I enter the room. If that isn't proof of my kindness, what is? (ANNE *smiles across to* MR. B., *as* MRS. T. *sits back complacently in her chair*) If I had had a notion that you were experimenting and studying servant problems from my kitchen, what would I have done?

ANNE. I didn't choose your particular kitchen, Mrs. Thorndike. I was sent here by—by—by the employment bureau.

MRS. T. What would I think to let Estelle dabble her hands in dust and dishwater, just to study common servants. It would break her dear heart and mine. That wasn't all. I begin to believe you two had plans all made, didn't you? Mr. Brewster, you

have known Miss Mooring before, haven't you? That's why you came here?

MR. B. (*smiling*) But I came here because of your very urgent invitation. Upon my honor, I never knew Anne until I met her in your study, as—a—a maid. I am as surprised as you, I assure you.

MRS. T. (*puzzled*) But—but I thought I saw you kissing her!

MR. B. You did!

MRS. T. (*with shocked expression*) But—but how could you ask her to marry you—when you thought her a maid?

MR. B. (*smiling happily*) Love breaks all barriers, Mrs. Thorndike.

MRS. T. (*rises and smiles sweetly on them both as they sit together on the window-seat*) I've intruded long enough. I assure you, I wouldn't have come in if I'd known what was happening here. I suppose my news has made you all the happier, Mr. Brewster. (*she takes* ANNE'S *hand in hers*) My dear Miss Mooring, I hope you'll be very happy. (*shakes her finger in* ANNE'S *face*) But don't tell tales out of school, will you? (*her expression saddens, as she leaves the room. Aside*) Poor Estelle, how I hate to tell her!

MR. B. (*standing before* ANNE) Where did you say you were going with Susan? I had visions of a picture show, really!

ANNE. (*laughing*) You wouldn't believe me when I said I was going abroad.

MR. B. But I do now. You'll wait and go with me. To think I had to travel the globe to find you!

ANNE. (*rather seriously*) But there's Susan——

MR. B. Yes, Susan—you promised to take her with you, didn't you?

ANNE. I wanted Susan to go so badly. Poor girl, what a hard life she's had. But still she's always bright and happy. She was going to marry Jim, but

I thought she didn't love him enough. Their acquaintance has been so brief, too.

MR. B. (*teasingly*) Briefer than a day?

ANNE. (*laughing, as he kisses her*) You're right. I see now I shan't influence Susan any more, for after all, ruins and museums aren't as nice as husbands.

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